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I am Jennifer, and I am a resident of Hamden. I formerly taught in a New Haven charter school system, a New Haven public school, subbed in Cheshire High School, and subbed in Lyman Hall High School. I also student taught at Sheehan High School. As a result of working in education in various CT towns and living in the incredibly diverse town of Hamden, I know that there can be serious disparities from one town to the next, or even from one area of a town compared to another area. Such disparities mean not all students across the state have access to an equitable education. As someone who is still certified to teach, but not presently working in education, I am writing today in support of Raised Bill 948, An Act Addressing Education Funding and Racial Equity in Connecticut.

From my experiences working in systems in suburbs and in a city, I am aware that not all students have access to the same opportunities within their schools. Not only did I work as an educator, but I am also a former volleyball coach. Athletics can also help to expose the difference in resources and opportunities from one school to another. When I coached freshman volleyball in Farmington years ago there was an abundance of gym space for three teams to practice (Freshman, JV, and Varsity) and students had no financial barriers to purchasing their volleyball sneakers or knee pads. When I coached for a New Haven school they did not have a gym on campus and the kids had to take a bus to a different school for practice. For practice, the varsity had one side of a net to use and the JV got to use the other side of the net. Over the years, that school relocated and got a gym of their own, but at the time I was coaching many of my New Haven players could not afford volleyball specific sneakers and did not have the gym space for the same caliber of practice as the students I had coached in the suburbs. I also was paid less coaching in the city than I had been in the suburbs, so less funding could also mean not all players have access to the same quality of coaching. Due to the legacy of systemic racism, red-lining, etc more affluent school systems tend to have fewer students of color than many of the less affluent city schools. Where one lives should not impact the quality of the public education they receive, but as long as schools are funded by taxes such inequities have persisted.

Many schools now are potentially more segregated than they were years ago, as income disparities in CT have continued to grow during the pandemic. In order to close the gap and make education more equitable for students from all incomes and all skin colors, I believe this bill must be passed. Even within Wallingford, there were differences between the two high schools. At the time both schools did not serve English Language Learners, so all ELL students had to attend Lyman Hall. Such differences do not equitably serve all students.

That's why I believe this bill must be passed. Funding inequities across and within our schools are preventing our students--particularly English Language Learners, students of color and children from low-income families--from getting the excellent education they deserve.

Connecticut students have faced unprecedented hardship over the past year, and cannot wait multiple years to attend a fully-funded school. Thank you for considering my perspective. I eagerly hope you will lend your support for Raised Bill 948, An Act Addressing Education Funding and Racial Equity in Connecticut. Thank you.